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TAB "A"

G-2 Contribution to NIE 35/1, "Probable Developments in Indochina
through Mid-1952"

I. CURRENT MILITARY SITUATION**1. French and Associated States****a. Strength and Composition**

(1) The French Ground Forces in Indochina number 185,000.

These forces are of mixed composition, which is as follows:

French	55,000
Foreign Legion	18,500
North African	27,000
African	16,500
Indochinese	<u>68,000</u>
Total	185,000

(2) These forces comprise 8 armored regiments, and 15 artillery, 8 parachute, and 100 infantry battalions, plus headquarters and service units. Some of these units have been grouped into two provisional light divisions of three mobile groups (RCT equivalent) each, which form a mobile reserve in Tonkin. In addition to these forces, there are approximately 48,500 native militia-type auxiliaries to the French Ground Forces.

(3) Operating under French operational control are the Armed Forces of the Associated States of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. The strengths of these forces are:

Associated States Regulars	77,000
Associated States Auxiliaries	<u>56,000</u>
Total	133,000

The Associated States Regulars include 37 battalions of the Vietnam Army, the North, Central and South Vietnam Guards, 5 Cambodian and 5 Laotian battalions, and the National Guards of Cambodia and Laos. The National

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Guards are organized into company and platoon sized units. Serving with these forces are sizable French cadres and training missions. In addition, there are 76,500 semimilitary forces in Indochina.

b. Dispositions

The French and Associated States Regular forces are disposed as follows:

Tonkin	115,000 (3 Armored Regts, 86 Battalions. Some of these are grouped into 2 Light Divs of 10 - 15 Bns each)
Annam	46,000 (1 Armored Regt, 28 battalion-sized units)
Cochin-China	68,000 (4 Armored Regts, 34 Battalion-sized units)
Laos	16,500 (10 Battalions)
Cambodia	<u>16,500</u> (10 Battalions)
Total	262,000

c. Combat Efficiency

The French Regular Forces, including the Indochinese French Regulars, are fully trained and mobilized. Most of these troops have had some form of battle experience. The native forces, on the other hand, are still largely in the basic training stage and require further training before they can be considered fit for combat operations. Exceptions to this are the operational battalions and companies of the Vietnam, Cambodian and Laotian regular forces, and those elements of the native forces who are deployed as police and static guards and who will be used as such in the future. Expansion plans call for a Vietnamese National Army of eight divisions, four of which were being formed by the end of 1951. Slight increases are also planned for the Cambodian and Laotian Armies.

2. Viet Minh Forces

The over-all strength of the Viet Minh Regular Army is estimated at 130,000. This force is supported by 70,000 Regional troops and 70,000 poorly armed irregulars. Three-fourths of the Viet Minh strength is concentrated in Tonkin, where five infantry and one artillery divisions are

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disposed around the French perimeter. The remaining Viet Minh units are spread throughout Indochina, giving the Viet Minh control over northern Tonkin, major portions of the Annam coast, and parts of Cochinchina and Cambodia. Viet Minh regular forces are well trained and experienced in guerrilla-type operations. Viet Minh artillery support is limited, and there has been almost no defense against French air attacks. The heavy Viet Minh losses in recent operations and the absence of a decisive military success may cause a drop in morale, both in the high command and among the troops in the line.

3. Current Operations

- a. Following a limited French offensive in Tonkin in November, the Viet Minh have been attacking almost continuously at various points in Tonkin since 6 December.
- b. Extensive Viet Minh infiltration of the Tonkin perimeter continues, and the Viet Minh are moving large quantities of rice out of the Delta, according to the French. Heavy movement of convoys of human carriers behind the front all along the northern Tonkin perimeter, as well as heavy traffic on the Red River, have been reported by French air observers. While the Viet Minh have been unable to achieve a major victory in Tonkin, they have forced the French to commit almost all of their reserves in that area.
- c. Material aid received from the U.S. has proved of value to the regular French forces during recent operations. However, there has not yet been a significant increase in the capabilities of the Associated States' Forces.
- d. Some 15,000 Chinese Communist advisors and technical personnel are believed to be in Indochina training and advising the Viet Minh Armed Forces. Chinese Communist arms aid has increased in recent months, and presently is at an all-time high. Intensive construction and repair work on lines of communication leading to Indochina would facilitate Chinese Communist intervention in Indochina or material assistance to the Viet Minh.

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e. A major recent development has been increasing Viet Minh use of antiaircraft weapons. It seems definite that the Viet Minh are now using 40mm guns, probably received from the Chinese or even possibly from the Soviet Union.

f. Although there are indications that the Viet Minh may be suffering from a lack of trained replacements there is no evidence of an early decrease in the scale of operations against the French. Both the magnitude and frequency of recurrence of Viet Minh operations have served to reduce the number of French reserve units to a minimum. Although the French probably are capable of maintaining their present perimeter against continued Viet Minh operations of the magnitude experienced to date, a relatively small increase in the scale of these operations might be sufficient to force a contraction of the French position. This situation reflects a recent increase in the Viet Minh capability against the French which is probably due in large part to assistance received from external sources.

4. Chinese Communist Capability to Assist the Viet Minh

a. Short of Open Intervention

(1) Under present circumstances or in the event of intensified fighting in Korea, the major limitation upon increased Chinese Communist assistance would be the availability of materiel. The availability of manpower and difficulties of supporting forces in Indochina would impose no limit until Chinese Communist intervention reached the proportion of a large-scale military operation.

(2) There are heavy current demands upon Chinese Communist resources of military materiel for prosecution of the Korean war, maintenance of internal security, assistance to foreign Communist movements, and training and reorganization of the Chinese Communist Army. In view of these demands, and of limitations on amounts of materiel available to the Chinese Communists from current production and stockpiles, any major increase in the amount of materiel furnished to the Viet Minh by the Chinese Communists

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would depend upon the scale of Soviet materiel assistance to the Chinese Communists. If it is in consonance with Soviet over-all plans for Asia, the scale of Soviet military assistance could be increased significantly, allowing a corresponding increase in Chinese Communist aid to the Viet Minh, provided that Chinese Communist requirements for their own use did not increase.

(3) In the event of an armistice in Korea, and provided that the scale of Soviet support for the Chinese Communists does not decline, Chinese Communist capabilities would be enhanced. Consequently, an armistice in Korea, or a prolonged de facto cease-fire, could greatly increase the Chinese Communist capability to assist the Viet Minh.

b. For Open Intervention with Regular Troops

(1) Ground Forces Available - It is estimated that the Chinese Communists have deployed in the area south of the Yangtze River approximately 900,000 Field Force troops. Of this total, it is estimated that approximately 600,000 troops are needed for coastal defense and local security (10 armies totalling 300,000 in the coastal provinces of Fukien, Chekiang, and southern Kiangsu; 2 armies each in Kewichow, Hunan, Kiangsi, and Kwangtung totalling 240,000; and 1 army each in Yunnan and Kwangsi provinces totalling 60,000). This would leave approximately 300,000 available for commitment to an invasion of Indochina.

(2) Status of Training and Equipment of These Forces

(a) The troops in the area south of the Yangtze River belong to the Second, Third, and Fourth Field Armies, with the bulk of the forces in the provinces bordering Indochina belonging to the Second and Fourth Field Armies. The combat efficiency of these Field Armies is rated in the order Fourth, Third, and Second.

(b) The artillery available to the troops south of the Yangtze is limited, but this deficiency might be remedied by redeployment from North China and Korea. It appears, however, that the demands

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of the Korean fighting have first priority on the limited artillery available to the Chinese Communist Army as a whole and that under present circumstances the reinforcement potential in terms of artillery for an invasion of Indochina is not great.

(c) The infantry component of the Chinese Communist forces south of the Yangtze probably is adequately equipped with normal infantry light weapons and its training probably is sufficiently advanced to allow this force to attempt an invasion. Although replacements have been sent from these units to Korea, it is believed that any deficiencies in personnel strength have been made up by recruiting. There are also indications that some Korean veterans have been returned from Korea and are giving the benefit of their experience to the units to which they have returned. This leavening of combat veterans from Korea, combined with a core of veterans of the mainland campaigns, is probably sufficient to render the combat efficiency of the troops in South China equal to that of the troops now in Korea, with due allowance for the disparity in supporting weapons.

(3) Transportation Facilities

(a) The principal restriction upon the number of forces which can be logistically supported in Indochina by the Chinese Communists is imposed by the limited transportation facilities in the border area. The main rail line to the Indochina border area runs from Hengyang, through Kweilin, Luichow and Nanning to the vicinity of the border at Chennankuan. This rail line has an estimated maximum capacity of approximately 1,800 tons per day. However, difficulty of distribution from the railhead forward to the using troops would probably limit the useful rail tonnage to from 600 to 900 tons daily. Other supply routes into the border area include (1) the old rail line from Kunming through Mengtze and Laokay to Yen Bay, inoperable from Mengtze to the Indochina border and only partially restored south of the Indochina border by the Viet Minh; (2) motor roads from Ho Chih

SECRET
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SECRET
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to Caobang and from Kweilin to Langson via Luichow and Nanning; (3) the route by sea from Canton to Hsiying and thence overland to Moncay or Nanning; and (4) the West River from Canton via Nanning to Lungchow.

(b) Although the combined capacities of these various routes would probably exceed 2,000 tons per day, local conditions would require increasing reliance upon the use of pack animals, carts, and hand carry to move supplies forward. The difficulties involved in distributing tonnage forward from the rear area supply points would probably limit useful tonnage to roughly 900-1,000 tons per day. This tonnage would be sufficient to permit a flow of supplies capable of sustaining at least 150,000 troops in combat for short offensive operations each of about one week's duration. Organic deficiencies within the tactical units and limitations in the transportation facilities would then require intervals for replenishment of supplies and repair of damaged transportation facilities. Operations would take the form of a succession of local offensives, each of limited duration.

(4) Effect of Korean Operations

(a) The current situation in Korea requires a relatively low expenditure of materiel by the Chinese Communists, and this has been reflected in an apparent increase in the quantities of weapons and ammunition sent to the Indochina border area and to the Viet Minh. An intensification of the Korean hostilities would probably substantially reduce the flow of supplies for Indochina unless the Soviets undertook to replenish the Chinese Communist stocks. Such Soviet aid would be probable in the event of Chinese Communist commitment of forces in Indochina.

(b) An armistice in Korea, or an extended de facto cease-fire, would increase the quantity of troops and military supplies that could be made available for operations in Indochina. However, the transportation restrictions discussed above would still prevail to a large extent.

~~SECRET~~
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5. Viet Minh Capabilities During the Next Six Months

a. If the Chinese Communists continue their program of technical, advisory, and material assistance at about the present level, the Viet Minh forces should be able to continue their present successful tactics of causing severe attrition of French forces and equipment by maintaining pressure on the western part of the Red River Delta perimeter and at numerous points within the Delta itself. Viet Minh recapture of the Hoa Binh area should be possible. Because of the heavy Viet Minh losses in manpower during December 1951 and January 1952, however, the Viet Minh will probably not be capable of maintaining the tempo of their recent attacks, but will soon require a rest and reorganization period. In general, continuance of Chinese Communist aid is likely to produce a continued over-all military stalemate in Indochina.

b. If the Chinese Communists increase the volume of advisory, manpower, and material assistance to the Viet Minh, the latter should be able progressively to cause a contraction of the French defense perimeter in Tonkin. The introduction of the equivalent of two or three divisions -- 20,000 to 30,000 troops -- probably would enable the Viet Minh initially to retake the Hoa Binh salient and to increase their harassment of the Hanoi-Haiphong line of communication, and possibly would enable the Viet Minh to regain some territory in the extreme south of the Delta. An increase in the number of Chinese Communist "volunteers", to a figure on the order of 50,000, would probably enable the combined Sino-Viet Minh forces to retake Hanoi and force the French forces back into the Haiphong redoubt. The speed with which this withdrawal would take place would depend on the manner of introduction and employment of the Chinese Communist volunteer forces. Their rapid commitment would undoubtedly precipitate a French appeal for assistance. Without a promise of outside assistance, the French would probably prepare for ultimate evacuation from Tonkin.

~~SECRET~~
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c. If the Chinese Communist commit regular ground forces to the Indochina operation on a large scale, the French would be forced to withdraw rapidly to the Haiphong redoubt area, and their evacuation probably would be caused before any effective outside assistance could be brought to bear. These results could be achieved by the Chinese Communists even while continuing their present commitment in Korea. Assuming an armistice in Korea, the combined Sino-Viet Minh forces would be able, through mid-1952, to undertake extensive preparations from a Tonkin base for further operations against any remaining French forces elsewhere in Indochina.

6. French-Vietnamese Capabilities During the Next Six Months

a. If the present scale of Chinese Communist assistance to the Viet Minh continues, the French can hold, with the increasing receipts of United States MDAP, their present defense zone in Tonkin. The French can probably hold their general position, though not all areas in the Delta, against a Viet Minh force aided by up to perhaps 20,000 to 30,000 Chinese Communist "volunteers," but as that number increased, the French position would become progressively more precarious. Attacks by Viet Minh forces aided by 50,000 Chinese Communists, would probably force the French to withdraw into the Haiphong redoubt area to prepare for ultimate evacuation. The French could not withstand for long an attack including major elements of regular Chinese Communist Field Forces, and would be forced to evacuate Tonkin.

b. French-Vietnamese capabilities are expected to improve slowly through continued shipments of United States aid and continuing expansion of the Vietnamese National Army. French replacements but not reinforcements can be expected. However, any French increase would probably be offset by at least corresponding increases in Viet Minh strength because of Chinese Communist assistance.

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7. Importance of Indochina to the USSR and Communist China

a. Indochina is important to the Soviet Union and Communist China not only as one country included in the over-all Communist plan to establish Communist domination throughout Southeast Asia, but also for its limited material resources and its potential as a base for future Communist operations elsewhere. On the negative side, the denial of Indochina to the West not only would deprive the non-Communist powers of raw materials but also of potential bases from which to operate against China. In addition, the fall of Indochina to the Communists would be a blow to Western prestige and would influence other Asians in favor of Communism and would probably lead to the fall of all of southeast Asia to the Communists.

8. Factors Affecting Communist Courses of Action with Respect to Indochina

a. The Communist decision with regard to future action in Indochina will be made upon the basis of over-all Communist objectives, Communist capabilities and the Communist estimate of probable Western reaction to Communist actions.

b. The ultimate Soviet objective in southeast Asia is the establishment of Communist regimes dominated by the Kremlin. There appear to be two broad courses of action which the Chinese Communists may follow with respect to Indochina in pursuit of this objective. These are: (1) outright military intervention with regular forces; and (2) continuation and possible intensification of the present policy of giving military assistance short of open intervention by Chinese Communist regular forces.

c. Should Communist actions in Indochina result in further major commitment of Western resources, Communist capabilities would thereby become increased elsewhere.

d. Advantages of outright military intervention would be:

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(1) If successful, outright Chinese Communist military intervention would be the quickest method of gaining the ultimate Communist objective, and would deal a severe blow to Western prestige.

(2) If countered by Western military action, outright Chinese Communist military intervention would result at least in maldeployment of Western military forces and a severe drain on Western military and economic resources.

e. Disadvantages of outright military intervention in Indochina by the Chinese Communists would be:

(1) Communist China might become committed beyond the limits of her present military capabilities and thus lose the freedom to act elsewhere in southeast Asia or against Formosa.

(2) There would be an increasing requirement for Soviet materiel assistance to the Chinese Communists.

(3) Communist China might become involved in general hostilities with the Western Powers and be subjected to retaliatory military action.

(4) International tension would increase, and global war would become more probable.

f. Continuation and intensification of the present Chinese Communist military assistance to the Viet Minh might eventually result in attainment of the Communist objective without creating as great a risk of Chinese Communist over-committment generating the requirement for as large amounts of Soviet military assistance as would open intervention. In the case of intensified Chinese Communist military assistance to the Viet Minh, short of open intervention, there would be the added advantage that the risk of general war between Communist China and the Western Powers would be less than in the case of open intervention and the probability of global war would be less.

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9. Military Indications of Current Chinese Communist Intentions with Respect to Indochina.

a. Military indications of Chinese Communist intentions fall into seven general categories:

(1) Reports of a Chinese Communist troop build-up in South China - In the past several months there have been numerous reports from French, British, and Chinese sources that a considerable build-up of Chinese Communist troops has taken place in South China, particularly in Kwangsi. While some additional forces appear to have moved into the area within 150 miles of the Indochina border, this movement does not necessarily indicate that a Chinese Communist move against Indochina is imminent.

(2) Alleged formation of a "volunteer force" for service in Indochina - A large number of low-grade reports suggested, about February 1951, the existence of a Chinese Communist "volunteer army" composed of elements drawn from regular Field Force units, provincial troops, border tribesmen, and other irregular formations. French agent reports of late 1951 established to French satisfaction the existence of a recruiting headquarters for a force, with a probable strength of about 30,000. It appears that the "army headquarters" is probably not in any sense an operational command, but rather is a planning and administrative organization.

(3) Deployment of Viet Minh units - During early 1951 Viet Minh regular divisions in Tonkin were spread fairly equally around the French perimeter. At present, four of the five Viet Minh infantry divisions are deployed along the Western part of the perimeter, leaving the area opposite the northern section of the line weakly held. Such deployment suggests the possible introduction of Chinese Communist troops on the routes of approach from northeast Tonkin to the Delta area.

(4) Reported movement of Chinese Communist units into Indochina - Shortly after the extension of Chinese Communist control over

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South China in late 1949, low-grade reports began to be received that Chinese Communist combat formations were moving into Indochina. As yet, however, no Chinese Communist units or individuals have been encountered in combat in Indochina, and it is not believed that any purely Chinese Communist units are in the combat zone.

(5) Improvement in lines of communication from China to Indochina - During 1951 there definitely has been a program of improvement of road and rail lines from South China into Tonkin. This program has increased Chinese Communist capabilities to move troops into Indochina or to move supplies to the Viet Minh, but the program does not necessarily indicate Chinese Communist intentions to take these actions.

(6) Movement and stockpiling of supplies - Available information indicates that Chinese Communist material assistance to the Viet Minh increased significantly in late 1951, and numerous depots for the storage of military supplies have been reported to exist on both sides of the China-Indochina border. This activity could indicate either preparations for open intervention by the Chinese Communists or preparations to increase the scale of material assistance to the Viet Minh.

(7) The current military situation - Viet Minh capabilities are improving and probably will continue to improve. There are no indications that the Viet Minh are about to suffer such serious reverses that Chinese Communist intervention would be mandatory to maintain the Communist position in Indochina.

Military indications of Communist ground activity in South China and Tonkin lead to the following conclusions:

(1) There are indications that the Chinese Communists are preparing for eventual intervention in Indochina, particularly should the Viet Minh suffer serious reverses.

(2) Present evidence is insufficient to indicate imminent Chinese Communist intervention in Indochina on a large scale.

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(3) Chinese Communist military assistance to the Viet Minh, short of open intervention by regular units, probably will increase during the period of this estimate.

(4) Any Chinese Communist intervention which may occur will be at a time and place of Communist China's choosing.

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